



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 29, 2013

By: Sgt. Balinda O'Neal

Alaska National Guardsmen rescue plane crash victims in Patton Bay

CAMP DENALI, Alaska—Airmen with the Alaska Air National Guard's 210th, 211th and 212th Rescue Squadrons rescued a pilot and his passenger involved in a plane crash overnight in Patton Bay at Montague Island.

According to the 11th Air Force Rescue Coordination Center, the pilot had filed a flight plan indicating he left Soldotna for Montague Island with plans to return to Soldotna. When he failed to arrive back in Soldotna, the FAA issued an alert notification for the overdue aircraft, a Bellanca 8GCBC, shortly before 9:30 p.m. April 28.

The Alaska Air National Guard's 176th Wing search-and-rescue duty officer accepted the mission at 9:30 p.m. to search for the overdue aircraft, and following a situation brief, notified the 210th, 211th and 212th Rescue Squadrons of the situation. An HC-130 "King" aircraft from the 211th Rescue Squadron, with a Guardian Angel pararescue team from the 212th Rescue Squadron onboard, took off from Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson at 11:26 p.m., followed shortly by an HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopter from the 210th Rescue Squadron with another Guardian Angel team onboard.

The HC-130 visually located the overdue aircraft at 11:56 p.m. overturned on a sandbar in Patton Bay, and a short time later, the HH-60 helicopter was able to land nearby. The Guardian Angel team assessed the two survivors' conditions, both reported to be uninjured, and loaded them into the helicopter.

At approximately 2:20 a.m. the HH-60 helicopter landed on a Soldotna hospital pad where the survivors were released for further evaluation.

According to the RCC, the survivors were planning on beachcombing when the aircraft flipped on its back after landing.

"The importance of filing a good VFR flight plan is what resulted in the speedy recovery," said Capt. Jeremiah Brewer, senior rescue controller, 11th Air Force Rescue Coordination

Center. "It would have resulted in an even faster recovery if there was a 406 beacon installed in the aircraft."

According to the RCC, after the aircraft flipped, the 406 beacon would have immediately initiated a satellite signal indicating a possible distress situation that would have required the RCC's response. Rescuers wouldn't have had to wait until the plane passed its schedule arrival time at its final destination.

"In this case, the survivors walked away," Brewer said. "That's not always the case, and a three to four hour response time might have been too late."

The Alaska Air National Guard's 210th, 211th and 212th Rescue Squadrons were awarded two saves for this mission.

###